

**Original citation:**

Haywood, Will (2018) Efficient and effective : using digital audio for formative feedback. In: Warwick Education Conference, University of Warwick, 15 May 2018

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/103324>

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# Efficient and Effective: Using digital audio for formative feedback

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Formative feedback is an important factor in a student's academic development. A time saving alternative to written feedback could be recording digital audio files. An initial trial has received positive student feedback, particularly around the clarity of feedback and in supporting students with dyslexia.

## Good Feedback

According to Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006), good feedback practice:

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment in learning.
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
3. Helps clarify what good performance is
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teachings.

## Audio Feedback

According to MELSIG (2018), audio feedback “exemplifies effective feedback methods” outlined above as it can:

- Clarify learning through direct detailed explanations
- Personalise learning, using the voice to establish a connection between marker and student
- Be meaningful and be used to challenge, support and motivate the student

## Pilot Project

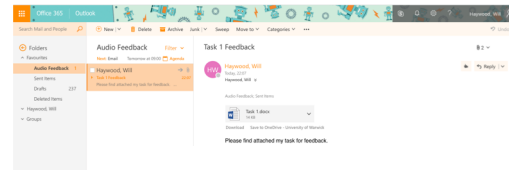
Digital audio was used to give formative feedback to a group of fifteen students on two tasks which formed part of a larger portfolio. To record the audio ‘Simple Recorder’ (a free app available for Mac) was used with the internal microphone on the computer. The process used is outlined in the centre column.

## References

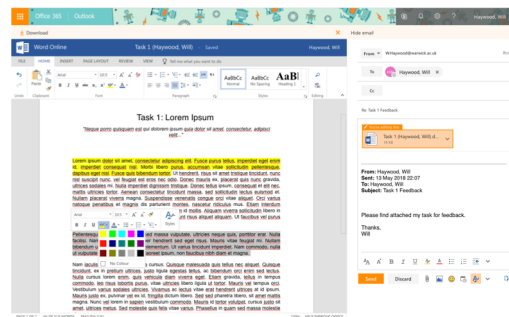
- MELSIG (2018). *Audio Feedback Toolkit*. [online] Available at: <https://melsig.shu.ac.uk/melsig/resources/audio-feedback-toolkit/> [Accessed 8 May 2018].
- Nicol, D.J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D., 2006. Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Published in Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), pp.199–218.



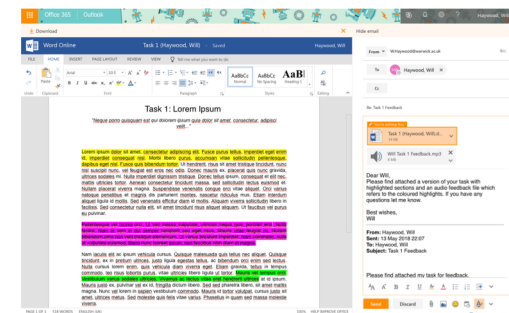
Students attached their task to an email using Word. They were instructed to *use a specific subject* so an Outlook *inbox rules* could filter them into a specific folder.



Using Outlook 365 attachments can be opened and edited without downloading the file. The *highlighter* feature was used to identify areas for comment.



Comments were then recorded referring to the highlights, e.g. “*The section in yellow is a strong introduction but needs a citation.*”



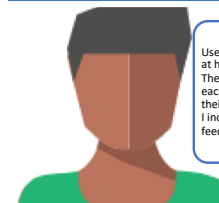
The audio file was saved and attached to the email and sent back to the student. On average students received about two and a half minutes of feedback.

## Feedback on the Audio Feedback

All students either *agreed*, or *strongly agreed* that “*the feedback was good quality*” and that:

- The feedback provided adequate detail
- The feedback was understandable
- The feedback helped me engage more with the module
- The feedback was provided quickly enough to be useful
- I acted on the feedback to improve my work
- The feedback had a positive effect on my learning
- The feedback promoted personal connection with my tutor

Student 1



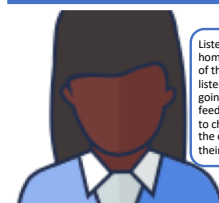
Used a desktop computer at home or in the library. They listened 2-4 times to each file prior to editing their work to ensure that I included all points of the feedback in my work”.

Student 2



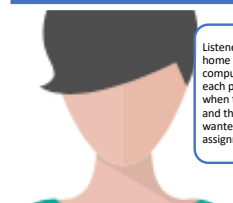
Used a laptop computer at home. He listened to the feedback in the evening, about four times. He listened with his family so they “could put up things I missed”. He found the feedback helpful but would have preferred it in writing.

Student 3



Listened using a laptop at home or during the middle of the working day. They listened twice, whilst going through the feedback and again later to check they had made the changes suggested in their work.

Student 4



Listened to the feedback at home on their laptop computer. They listened to each piece three times – when they first received it, and then when they wanted to improve their assignments.

- “I’m dyslexic and that was so much easier for me to understand and use to improve my work than writing”
- “This way is better than in writing, because there are times when the student does not understand exactly what the teacher means.”
- “The teacher can give longer and more understandable explanations.”
- “Its useful cause some things are easier to explain by talking rather than putting into words.”